

Dear Mayor Gordon,

1/16/91

Thank you for your letter. It is dated the 9th but postmarked the 14th, which is two days after the Post published most of my letter of the 4th. Should I wonder whether publication ^{triggered} ~~triggered~~ a back-dated response? Should I wonder also whether your conclusion, that you are "sure" your letter would not satisfy me, reflects a siege mentality on the matter of the prohibition of a left turn off of Rosement Avenue?

My purpose in writing was not and is not to provoke controversy and contention because they exist. Rather is it that in its effort to eliminate a problem, whether it is real or imagined, the city has created other problems that have been costly to its victims.

Although each week I turn into Shockstown Road from Rosement Avenue several times, it is ^{not usually} ~~never~~ between 3 and 6 p.m. However, keeping my eyes on the road and on traffic, I'd not seen the signs. Last night a friend drove me into town and at about 5:45 lo! there were two police cars the officers of which were writing tickets and a third officer on the corner ready to grab the next one. Returning after 6:00 and not having to observe traffic, I did see the three signs you referred to. Not easy and I'd not have seen them without knowing they were there. They are out of the line of vision of a driver paying full attention to his driving, the lettering is too small, and the signs make this inevitable because they are verbose. Do you really think that anyone driving on ~~Shockstown~~ Montevie and about to turn into Shockstown does not know where he is? and that blinker to which you refer? It is the kind used to mark construction, not a road sign.

Assuming this was necessary, and I see no statement in your letter that it really was, did it not occur to those responsible for having the signs made that all the information drivers require is "No Left Turn, 3-6 p.m., Mon-Fri"? Why take drivers' attention away from careful driving to read all those extra words the use of which compel the reduction in the size of the lettering?

I also see nothing in your letter that even suggests this cause of so much distress has been effective in relieving any problem. I'd have thought you'd want to at least suggest this if not boast about it.

I am not an expert on such things but it does seem to me that a single ^{large} sign using the metal wasted on those three would permit lettering large enough to be seen and read quickly and this would have cost no more than the three with all those extra letters that clearly are too small and entirely unnecessary.

Has it not occurred to any of you that when so many people do make that turn at those hours that something other than deliberate lawlessness has to be the cause? Not many people want to be delayed and to be charged \$45 for the delay.

I don't know whether that prohibition was or was not necessary. I do know that I make that turn often during morning rush-hour, when traffic toward the center of town is heavy, and that there never is any real problem. Drivers merely wait until they can go.

This leads me to believe that it is no more unsafe at the time of evening driving and that there is some other explanation for the prohibition.

You confuse two unrelated things in your letter, the alleged "uniqueness" of the one-way bridge and widening of the road elsewhere, not at that bridge. The bridge can and all the many people who have spoken to me believe should be widened. There is not a single front porch near it, leave alone the dozen you ~~do~~ refer to.

There is the matter of the absence of lines marking the edges of ^{Shookstown} the road where there is no shoulder at all and where the utility poles are as close as a foot to the edge of the paving, a real ~~hazard~~ rather than an imagined safety hazard, as the many accidents involving them attest. I'm sorry you saw fit to ignore this when I raised it with you in writing, for the second time. The friend who drove me, who is from the midwest, was shocked to see that virtually 100% of these poles are so close to the roadway.

You say the city did not act in response to the clamor of a minority and I do not, obviously, know what did impel the city to do what it did. But there can be little doubt that the all-way stop on Willowdale was in response to such clamor. I use that road often. That stop sign is a safety hazard, not a benefit to drivers or conducive to safety. I am certain that at least 95% of the time I do not even see a car on the cross street. and then the sign was placed so high it is not easily observed in daylight and unless one knows it is there, it is close to invisible at night.

I think the city owes us an explanation of the results of the prohibited turn from ~~Marquette~~ Rosedale, one that includes a tabulation by day of the number of motorists ticketed and soaked ~~by~~ \$45. When I saw two at one time last night at almost the end of the prohibited period I think it is a not unreasonable conclusion that what you have done is not working and requires, at the very least, thoughtful attention if not correction and rectification.

I am not trying to make problems for you. I am asking you to face and to do something about the problem you have created. You have made a problem where no exceptional problem existed. I was surprised at the number of fellow senior citizen-mall walkers I see daily ~~who~~ have spoken to me about this, all expressing appreciation for my writing the letter and ~~astute~~ disappointment ^{over} from the city's action and apparent unthinking obduracy. These are not youthful joy-riders. They are mature people for whom a minor accident can have the most serious consequences.

That the city limited speed to 20 mph on lower Shookstown Road must be in reaction to the clamor to which I referred. I use it often and do not remember seeing an accident. There is never really heavy traffic on it. Yet the city says drivers must drive more slowly there than anywhere within the city where streets are narrow and traffic is heavy. To accent the ridiculousness of this, those speed-limit signs were actually painted on the outbound end of that stretch almost where it ends!

The papers quote you as saying you don't care whether you are kissed or kicked. As

mayor I would hope that you'd rather be loved by citizens who think you are trying to serve the interests of a majority and that you would prefer to enjoy the good will and respect of those who vote.

So, as an older man I ask you to stop and think, to be sure that you are not being just stubborn and unwilling to admit that the city did err. We are none immune to error but it is the mark of a big man that he can admit it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Harold Weisberg".

Harold Weisberg

PAUL P. GORDON
Mayor

GLENN L. NIKIRK
Administrative Assistant

CAROLYN B. TRUE
Executive Assistant



January 9, 1991

Aldermen
WILLIAM O. LEE, JR.
President Pro Tem
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JON F. KREISSIG
JAMES S. GRIMES

BARBARA A. DUNBAR
Legislative Clerk

Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, MD 21701

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Thank you for your letter of January 4, 1991, concerning Shookstown Road. Unfortunately, there is a misunderstanding of the actions that led to the Shookstown Road traffic change.

In the mid 1970's when the City's first comprehensive plan was developed, the two block area of Shookstown Road between Montevue Lane and Rosemont Avenue was designated to remain as a rural road with no improvements. That plan indicated that Montevue Lane would become an arterial and along with Shookstown Road, west of Montevue Lane, would serve the expanding area of Frederick as well as that traffic generated by the county residents. There has never been any plan to upgrade the rural road portion of Shookstown Road to carry any additional traffic than what it carried in 1975.

This plan has been discussed by the Planning Commission in public hearings on a number of occasions as the area to the west has developed. In fact, it was from one of these discussions relating to an eight house subdivision being built across from the Conley Farm which precipitated an in-depth analysis of this two block section of Shookstown Road. This occurred in the last year and a half.

Although there was testimony about the danger to children living in the area, the decision was based upon the comprehensive plan and the traffic using the road. It was not done, as you indicate, for the convenience of a few.

Over the years, the concerns that led to this decision related to the uniqueness of the one-way bridge, the country lane portion between Montevue Lane and Baughman's Lane which we wanted to retain and the fact that a widening of the road would affect twelve houses, bringing the road bed to the front porches or front doors of these houses.

It was our intention to begin the improvement of both Montevue Lane and the western portion of Shookstown Road this past fall, but we ran into some right-of-way problems. Then came the budgetary difficulties of the state, the county, and the city related to economic conditions, and these projects have now been put on hold until the economy turns around.

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During the last year and a half, there has been considerable public discussion at numerous hearings relating to Shookstown Road and Montevue Lane. In my judgement, it would be appropriate to make Shookstown Road one-way north from Montevue Lane to Rosemont Avenue, thus eliminating the left turn from Rosemont Avenue at all times. The Board, however, saw differently.

Initially, they voted to close Shookstown Road at the bridge, and then relented and decided to eliminate the left turn from Rosemont Avenue during peak hours. Once the signs were in place, there was no enforcement for six weeks and a considerable number of drivers continued the left turn. Since that six week grace period, we have vigorously enforced the no left turn prohibition and will continue to do so. There are two overhead signs and one sign on the corner which has a flasher attached. The first day of the enforcement, we put flares on Rosemont Avenue and had the police sitting in the middle of Shookstown Road with lights flashing. People still turned. One day, there was a barricade placed across the portion of the road and the people turned around the barricade and proceeded on Shookstown Road.

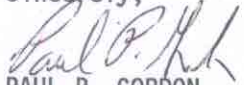
There have been news articles, announcements on the radio and a continuing message on channel 50 of cable television. I do not know what else the City can do to notify the public that a change has taken place.

Since these are moving violations, the City gets none of the revenues from the fines. This all goes to the district court system.

So you see from this explanation, a number of the suppositions upon which you based your letter are not correct. This was not a matter taken lightly, it was not done to succumb to a clamorous minority, the City does not get the revenue, it is not a speed trap since it received considerable publicity and a grace period of six weeks was given.

Although I am sure this will not satisfy your concerns, the fact is the law is the law and just as 49% of the users of the interstate in Maryland continue to exceed 55 miles an hour, based upon the most recent study, that does not make that speed limit any less the law.

Sincerely,


PAUL P. GORDON
Mayor
City of Frederick

PPG:bsz